

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently Amended) A printing system comprising;  
a plurality of marking engines for outputting printed media in a stream;  
one or more finishing stations for post processing the printed media; and  
a first media path system operable to transport the printed media from two or more of the marking engines to one or more finishing stations such that the streams are merged and transported one on top of the other and wherein the path system comprises first and second path sections that transport media in opposite directions along parallel paths, and a third path section that merges into and out of the first and second path sections such that media traveling along any of the first, second, or third path sections may be routed to any other of the first, second, or third path sections.

2. (Original) The printing system of claim 1, further comprising:  
one or more media feeder systems; and  
a second media path system operable to transport media from any of the media feeder systems to any of the plurality of marking engines.

3. (Original) The printing system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of marking engines output printed media in parallel streams.

4. (Original) The system of claim 1, in which the one or more finishing stations are capable of compiling the media in groups of 2 or more sheets.

5. (Original) The system of claim 1, in which the one or more finishing stations comprise a tamping mechanism to post process the media.

6. (Original) The printing system of claim 1, wherein the first media path system further comprises transport drive nips having driven rollers on a top and bottom side of the media stream.

7. (Currently Amended)) The printing system of claim 1, wherein the first media path system comprises at least one modular element having:

~~first and second path sections that transport media in opposite directions along parallel paths; and~~

~~a third path section that merges into and out of the first and second path sections such that media traveling along any of the first, second, or third path sections may be routed to any other of the first, second, or third path sections.~~

8. (Original) The printing system of claim 7, wherein the at least one modular element is operable to selectively stack media in variable numbers of sheets.

9. (Original) The printing system of claim 7, wherein the at least one modular element is operable as a buffer to temporarily hold media.

10. (Original) The printing system of claim 7, wherein the at least one modular element is operable to route media from any of the plurality of marking engines to any of the one or more finishing stations in the event of a failure of a marking engine or finishing station.

11. (Currently Amended) A method of operating a printing system comprising;

outputting printed media in multiple streams;

transporting the printed media along first and second path sections that transport media in opposite directions along parallel paths, and a third path section that merges into and out of the first and second path sections such that media traveling along any of the first, second, or third path sections may be routed to any other of the first, second, or third path sections ~~such that the streams are transported one on top of the other;~~ and  
post processing the printed media.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, further comprising

transporting media from any of a plurality of media feeder systems to any of a plurality of marking engines for outputting the multiple streams.

13. (Original) The method of claim 11, further comprising outputting the multiple streams in parallel.

14. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein post processing the printed media includes tamping the printed media.

15. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein transporting the printed media comprises driving a top and bottom side of the media stream.

16. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein transporting the printed media comprises selectively stacking or compiling media in groups of variable numbers of sheets.

17. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein transporting the printed media comprises temporarily buffering the media.

18. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the printing system includes a number of marking systems and finishing systems, and wherein transporting the printed media comprises routing media from any of the plurality of marking engines to any of the one or more finishing stations in the event of a failure of a marking engine or finishing station.